

Transcript of Reagan's News Conference on Gromyko Meeting and Budget

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WASHINGTON, Sept. 11 — Following is a transcript of President Reagan's news conference today, as made public by the White House.

OPENING STATEMENT

Well, good afternoon, and I'd like to make a short statement and then I'll be pleased to take some questions. I've invited Soviet Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko to meet with me at the White House on Sept. 28. And Mr. Gromyko has accepted. I believe it's important to use the opportunity provided by Mr. Gromyko's presence in the United States to confer on a range of issues of international importance.

One of my highest priorities is finding ways to reduce the levels of arms, and to improve our working relationship with the Soviet Union. I hope that my meeting with him will contribute to this goal as our Administration continues to work for a safer world.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Purpose of Invitation

Q. Mr. President — sir, after three and a half years of very little progress in U.S.-Soviet relations, some people might consider this a political ploy on your part to answer Mr. Mondale's charges that you've been lax in this area. How would you respond to that?

A. Well, I would answer that the facts would belie any such suggestion. The fact is we have opposed meetings with the Soviet Union on a number of occasions, and for a number of reasons. We have not retreated from any meetings with them. And this is the opening of the — at the time of the opening of the U.N. General Assembly, and he has announced his intention to come here. And so I extended an invitation that while he's here to come down to Washington.

Q. Do you think that they now believe that you're certain to be re-elected and want a meeting now because of that?

A. You'll have to ask them what their reasons are for accepting.

No — I was going to — Maureen.

President's Image

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. You said yourself in the past that you think some people think you're trigger-happy, and from the polls we can see this is one of the main concerns of people in this election campaign. Do you think this meeting will help people come to your way of thinking? That you're not the trigger-happy cowboy you say people like to portray you as?

A. Well, the most important thing is — is to — is what understanding we can — I can reach with Foreign Minister Gromyko to maybe convince him that the United States means no harm.

Outlook for Meeting

Q. You have always said that a summit meeting should be well pre-

pared and have a reasonable chance of success. This isn't a summit meeting, but —

A. No. — do you feel that this meeting with Mr. Gromyko meets that standard and how much can you really accomplish in a brief meeting at the White House?

A. I don't know. The meeting will be confidential, but we're here. And as I say, I think that maybe with all the specifics that are before us in various meetings with the Soviet Union — the various treaty negotiations, some of which are continuing but some of which they have walked away from, I think maybe the time has come that anything that can perhaps get a better understanding between our two Governments maybe should precede any resumption of dealings on specifics, if there can be an easing of any suspicion or hostility.

Soviet Intentions

Q. Do you have any concerns at all that the Soviets might use this meeting to try to embarrass you during the political campaign?

A. Well, again, you'll have to ask them what their intentions are.

Q. But do you have any concerns about that, sir?

A. What?

Q. Do you have any concerns?

A. No.

Treaty Violations

Q. Mr. President, there are reports that you're about to release a study showing Soviet violations of past arms control treaties. Are you going to release it and are you afraid that might sour the atmosphere for this meeting with Mr. Gromyko?

A. No, this is a matter that is a — require of the Congress, that we are to provide the Congress with a report. This report is being readied. I haven't had a chance to study it as yet. And, so, this is not some action by us or

aimed at the Soviet Union. It's supposed to be a factual report that the Congress requires.

Q. Well, but are you concerned that it might sour the — the atmosphere for this meeting that's coming up?

A. I have no way of knowing.

Q. Well, if you release a report listing their violations of past treaties, isn't that the kind of a statement on what you think of how they have conducted themselves?

A. But this isn't some choice of mine. This is something required by the Congress.

Yes?

Kremlin Leadership

Q. Mr. President, do you have any sense — you and your advisers — as to who is really in charge in the Kremlin and whether Mr. Gromyko is now sharing a much larger role of that collective leadership and what the health situation is with Mr. Chernenko?

A. Andrea, I'm not going to comment on what my opinion might be there and — we know that the Government of the Soviet Union has traditionally been a kind of a collective government of the — by the Politburo. And some leaders have over the years shown themselves as more dominant than others in that kind of collective, but I'm not going to hazard any guesses here because I've been facing a problem that no other President has faced and that is the great turnover that in three years of my term in office we've had three leaders there, and I'm just not going to hazard a guess. I'm going to deal with the Government as it's presented to me.

Arms Talks

Q. Is it your sense that with that kind of collective leadership that you might still be able to get a resumption of arms talks and what is your relative priority between the strategic negotiations resuming and initiating talks on space weapons? Which would be the most critical as far as you're concerned?

A. We've never put any preconditions on any talks contrary to what had been claimed against us. And I think that the — all of these tie together.

You can't talk about militarization of outer space without recognizing that all the strategic ballistic missiles come by way of outer space. So, I think the most important thing to begin with is to see if we cannot lessen this threat hanging over the world, and for which the Soviet Union and the United States are mainly responsible, of these powerful weapons that could affect nations' all nations, whether they were involved in a con-

trovery or not. That would have an effect on all of civilization.

And I just want to see if we can't do something that will rid the world of this threat.

Sam.

Budget Plans

Q. Mr. President, Walter Mondale has now tabled a fairly specific budget reduction plan and says it's only fair that you do the same before the election. Will you, sir, and if not, why not?

A. I don't think he's really submitted a budget — or a deficit reduction plan. I think he's submitted a tax plan — a tax increase plan. In fact, the only real specifics — three specifics there are — have to do with taxes.

As for any specifics on our part, they're voluminous. And they go back to 1981. I submitted four budgets and will be submitting a fifth before this term is out. And in all of those, they have thousands of words and substantiation, and had we been granted what I had asked in those budgets, the deficit today would be \$40 to \$50 billion less.

So, we believe that the deficit will be reduced by continued growth of the economy and by getting control of spending to where it does not increase faster than the increase in revenues from the growth of — in economy.

Now this year, already, the budget is \$30 billion less than what we ourselves had estimated at the beginning of the year, and that's largely due to faster economic growth.

Let me point out, if growth could continue at 4 percent, the revenues for government, without raising any-

one's taxes would be \$400 billion bigger by 1989. If we could keep the growth rate at 5.5 percent, the deficit would just about disappear from that alone.

Now, to keep the spending increase down, we have already reduced the rate of increase in spending by almost two-thirds. So we're going to continue along that line. We have 2,478 specific recommendations for improving the management of government for further economies that have been submitted by the Grace Commission, which I asked to serve and to come in with recommendations for us. And we've got other facts that go along with this specifics before the Congress, the Enterprise Zones, which are tied into increasing the economy, the Enterprise Zones legislation. We have the balanced budget amendment, the line-item veto. I think that I've put more specifics on the table in this term than probably any Administration I know.

Spending Cuts

Q. But, sir, if I may, growth alone won't do it, because you yourself have said previously that spending cuts are the way you want to achieve your

goal. Isn't it fair to spell out to the American people precisely what cuts you have in mind?

A. Yes, but what I'm saying, Sam, they're there. Take a look at the budgets I've already submitted and look at the cuts that I've asked for and was not given.

Now, what specifically has he proposed, other than some additional spending and his tax cuts and whacking away at the defense budget. But, as I say, the specifics are there and attested to by thousands of words of documentation.

Q. So if we take your last budget, sir, and look at them, look at the specifics, we'll have your next plan?

A. You will have a continuation of what we've been on.

It's as simple as this: if that rate of increase in spending can be brought down, as we've brought it down already, if at the same time, through economic growth, the rate of revenues begins to climb at a steeper rate than those two lines have to meet, and where they meet is a balanced budget. And this what our plan is. If I had a blackboard — but I would have looked like a teacher.

Q. Thank you, sir.

A. What?

Q. Could I —

A. I was hoping to get beyond the second row.

Q. Bruce —

Q. Mr. President —

A. I can't. Maureen is — Maureen said, no.

Q. Yes, but you pointed —

A. No, but let me tell you —

Q. The moving finger points and having pointed —

A. No, let me just say, we'll be back and there'll be more of — we'll be having more of these. So —

Q. Oh, when?

Q. When?

Q. Before the election?

Q. We'd like to make a date.

Q. What about debates?

A. I'm just going to wait and surprise you again.

Q. Are we going to have a full-scale half-hour news conference, sir, before the election?

A. I don't know; but, I've been talking about that myself.

Q. When's the first debate?

A. Can't take any more questions.

Q. How's the campaign going so far?

A. Save them for the next time. Save it for the next time.

Q. But we're not certain there's going to be a next time, sir.

Q. Thank you.



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